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## **SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES**

### **STATE OF MARYLAND One-Stop Profile**

**June 1996**

**Based on a Site Visit Conducted During March 1996**

# STATE OF MARYLAND

## One-Stop Profile

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# STATE OF MARYLAND

## One-Stop Profile

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### DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE CONTEXT

The state of Maryland has come into the One-Stop demonstration with a history of interagency cooperation and the joint administration and operation of specific programs and initiatives. These collaborative efforts will facilitate the implementation of the state's One-Stop service delivery system, which is called *CareerNet*. Statewide efforts during the first year of the USDOL implementation grant have focused primarily on developmental and planning activities to support a clearly articulated and ambitious statewide One-Stop vision, which is enumerated as follows:

*All One-Stop Career Centers will be part of a state and local community system providing quality service to both employers and citizens through the enhanced use of existing technology.*

The vision incorporates what key players believe to be a fundamental paradigm shift that includes the following dynamics:

- from individuals preparing for a career, to individuals preparing for lifelong learning;
- from specific programs for targeted groups, to an array of services, many of which are available to anyone;
- from public workforce development targeted to disadvantaged populations, to One-Stop Centers that are viewed as similar to public libraries, with no stigma attached, an emphasis on self-service, and personal assistance based upon need.

Technology is perceived as an “enabler,” supporting a clear business vision of a One-Stop service delivery system predicated upon the provision of high-quality information and services to a universal customer base. Within this clearly-defined schema, local areas have the flexibility to design and deliver services that meet local needs and demands. State respondents viewed *CareerNet* as part of an integrated service system, an initiative that can support, and be supported by, other critical initiatives, including School-to-Work, ES Revitalization, and welfare reform.

There are several contextual variables that have influenced, and continue to influence, One-Stop planning, design, implementation, and progress in the state of Maryland. The primary federal-level influence is clearly the national One-Stop vision, with its four broad outcome objectives to which the state has responded with a clear and distinct statewide One-Stop vision and design.

At the state level, there are two primary contextual variables that exert particularly strong influences on One-Stop implementation and progress: 1) a dynamic political and organizational environment; and 2) a vision with a strong technological component. Each is briefly described below.

- *There are significant changes taking place at the state level, so that Maryland's One-Stop system is moving forward amidst a dynamic political and organizational environment.* For example, within the Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation (DoLLaR), a key state-level agency, JTPA and ES are expected to merge by the beginning of the program year in order to increase effectiveness as part of the state's organizational restructuring process. Additionally, the state Department of Human Resources (DHR) is expected to assume complete administrative and operational control of the JOBS program as of 10/1/96 after jointly administering the program with DoLLaR since the program's inception. Therefore, the JTPA program will no longer be the presumptive deliverer of many services for customers of the JOBS program. State-level respondents believe this change to be related to impending welfare reform, although it is still being designed and debated in the state legislature. These and other instances of a changing organizational and political landscape have caused uncertainty among key One-Stop players as to how agency policies, roles, and staff functions will be influenced.
- *The fact that Maryland's One-Stop system has a clear technological backbone developed at the state level will enable CareerNet to offer a consistent and well-developed menu of services throughout the state, yet presents a host of additional design and implementation issues.* For example, keeping hardware and software development and installation on schedule and within the constraints of procurement rules and regulations has been a significant challenge. This has impacted the state's ability to be responsive to both state and local needs and timeframes. Moreover, although the technological infrastructure for *CareerNet* is still being developed and refined, the state is nevertheless pushing forward with statewide implementation of its One-Stop vision.

Maryland's One-Stop system continues to face rapid change from numerous directions. As characterized by one high-level state respondent, a major challenge of One-Stop implementation is having "several balls in the air at the same time." At the time of

the One-Stop site visit, many local sites were preparing to come on-line. The nine sites that were operational had been so for less than five months.

## **ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE STATE ONE-STOP INITIATIVE**

### **State-Level Organization and Governance**

There are two prominent state-level entities with respect to One-Stop governance in the state of Maryland. The *Governor's Workforce Investment Board* (GWIB) was established by state law in 1993 as the state's Human Resource Investment Council, replacing the former council mandated by JTPA. This entity holds a primary place in One-Stop governance as "the original convener" of the work to develop the statewide One-Stop concept, as the chief architect of the state's original One-Stop proposal, and as the One-Stop grant recipient. The *Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation* (DoLLaR) is another key player, acting as fiscal manager for the One-Stop grant. DoLLaR is also the entity responsible for the Job Service, UI, JTPA, Veterans' programs, the state's apprenticeship program, TAA and, currently in partnership with the state Department of Human Resources, the JOBS program (called "Project Independence").

Both entities in partnership are responsible for the planning, development, and implementation of One-Stop Centers, although their respective roles are shifting in response to One-Stop progress. GWIB's role, for instance, was more intensive at the outset of the grant, during the planning and development phase. With the state having recently entered its operational phase, the primary responsibility for One-Stop implementation has shifted to DoLLaR and, more specifically, to its Division of Employment & Training (DET).

The *local community college system* is another key partner entity in the statewide initiative. The community college system, which is governed by local boards, has historically been involved in workforce development as the primary vendor of training services throughout the state.

Additional agencies are involved in the statewide One-Stop initiative to the extent that they are represented on the GWIB, have authority over initiatives that support or complement the emerging workforce development system, and to the extent that these agencies are represented on the *CareerNet Steering Committee*. This is a broad-based One-Stop policy committee drawing representation from state and local agencies and organizations, including community-based organizations and major employers. It was established at the start of the One-Stop grant and is the primary vehicle through which stakeholders have the opportunity to influence and impact One-Stop implementation and

progress. Aside from the three primary players, state partner agencies represented on the *CareerNet* Steering Committee are:

- *Department of Human Resources* (DHR), which has primary responsibility for the JOBS program.
- *Maryland State Department of Education* (MSDE), which has authority over K-12 education and is responsible for administration of Maryland's School-to-Work initiative (called "Career Connections"), as well as the state-funded "Maryland's Tomorrow," a dropout prevention program. MSDE also contains a division related to adult career and technology programs.
- *The Division of Rehabilitation Service* (DORS), which is a separate division of the MSDE.
- *Maryland Higher Education Commission* (MHEC), which coordinates reporting and other activities across autonomous community college districts.
- *The Department of Business & Economic Development* (DBED), a recently formed state-level entity that provides training and other services to new and expanding businesses.

These agencies are generally considered "coordinating partners," functioning more in advisory rather than operational roles at present. The involvement of these partners is expected to increase, however, as the state moves forward with other features and priorities of the *CareerNet* system. Respondents from both GWIB and DoLLaR stressed that the state's first-year focus had been on developing a technological infrastructure and bringing local *CareerNet* Centers on-line in order to respond to individual job-seeker interests. Second-year priorities, including employer services, remote access and the establishment of Career Information Centers (described later) are believed to have more of an impact on coordinating partners' roles and customers.

Although respondents from coordinating agencies were generally pleased with their level of involvement and believed the One-Stop system to represent a "win-win" scenario for the state as well as for their respective agencies, some reservations were expressed. Particularly in the case of targeted populations, some respondents expressed concern over a system that places self-service options at a premium. Ultimately, however, respondents believed that technology was crucial as a means of universal access. As these entities become more directly involved in One-Stop design and implementation, it is reasonable to expect that they will be negotiating appropriate roles within the overall One-Stop system to the benefit of their agencies and customers.

### **State Framework for Local Governance**

The framework for local governance consists of a *Planning & Management Team*, which represents both the planning group and the local management team that provides accountability and policy guidance for all One-Stop centers in the community. This local team is convened by the Chairperson of the Private Industry Council and consists of a core of “critical stakeholders” as follows:

- PIC Chair or representative;
- Job Service Manager;
- SDA Director;
- Local community college representative; and
- One additional employer.

State One-Stop actors believed this framework to be the least contentious, building upon existing administrative structures, as opposed to creating an entirely new governance arrangement. Each of Maryland’s 12 SDAs were given \$21,000 planning grants in May 1995 to establish these local teams and to begin a One-Stop dialogue process among partners. Membership on these local teams is reflective of the mandatory “core partners,” which are believed to provide the preponderance of workforce development services and represent key funding streams: the Job Service (which is co-located with UI throughout the state), JTPA, and the local community college. (Although JOBS represents a key funding stream, the program has historically been jointly administered by DHR and DoLLaR; thus, JTPA has, in effect, been linked with this funding stream.) These three entities represent candidate “host sites” for local One-Stop Centers. In addition, management and administration of the One-Stop/*CareerNet* investment and equipment at each local site is the responsibility of the respective host agency, which is required to sign an agreement with the state. Notwithstanding these formal requirements, local teams can expand their membership to include other entities and are encouraged to do so (e.g., local education agencies, local providers, local DSS offices).

### **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

The primary formal means through which agencies communicate and coordinate is the *CareerNet* Steering Committee and various workgroups related thereto. Although the Steering Committee meets on a monthly basis, workgroups pertaining to specific issues and priorities draw representation or nominations from the committee and meet on a more frequent basis. During the first year of the implementation grant, five workgroups were charged with guiding the specification of the core features and services to be offered at One-Stop/*CareerNet* Centers. These included Job Entry Assistance, Participant Record

System, Career Exploration Assistance, Customer Development, and Employer Access. During this second year, four new workgroups and one continuing workgroup are also planned (i.e., Employer Access, Consumer Reports, Performance Management, Integrated Intake/Case Management, Remote Job Seeker Access/Career Information Centers). In addition to these formal mechanisms, partner agencies also communicate on a frequent and informal basis, primarily through a key staffmember of the GWIB, who has an “open door” to all of the partner entities and whose role as general facilitator and One-Stop liaison was highly lauded by various respondents.

Communication and coordination mechanisms between state and local One-Stop staff are evolving as the state continues through the operational phase of *CareerNet*. Early in the implementation period, “*CareerNet* Newsletters” were transmitted on a monthly basis by DoLLaR to ensure consistent communication of information and guidance as implementation progressed. These newsletters were more accurately described as policy issuances that focused on One-Stop/*CareerNet* implementation in the initial local sites. When the first nine sites became operational shortly before the end of the first year of the grant period, the series was discontinued. Subsequently, there was a gap in formal One-Stop communication mechanisms. Respondents regretted this lapse, which was attributed to other pressing priorities. However, plans have been made for new approaches to maintain open lines of communication between state and local One-Stop actors, including the establishment of “Local Liaisons” and monthly meetings, each described below.

A new job classification is being created within DoLLaR for “Local Liaisons,” who will interface with local One-Stop staff as facilitators and consultants responsible for general “workforce development.” Each will be responsible for specific territories and will not focus on compliance monitoring, which is a function carried out separately and by different staff. At the time of the site visit, the state’s training institute had begun providing training for Local Liaisons, augmenting the training that had taken place within DoLLaR.

Additional plans include monthly meetings with key DoLLaR staff, including the *CareerNet* Operations Director, managers of local sites that are operational, and “Resource Area Specialists.” (The latter is a new job title established as a direct result of One-Stop/*CareerNet* implementation. These individuals, who can be employed by either of the three mandatory core partners, are responsible for assisting customers in utilizing the technology and other resources at local sites). One meeting had already been held at the time of the site visit, at which it was decided that Resource Area Specialists around the state



needed to meet on a frequent and ongoing basis, especially during early implementation efforts in order to share experiences and ideas.

#### **FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS, BUDGETING, AND FISCAL ISSUES**

The state has used One-Stop implementation funding to move forward in the realization of its vision of a statewide system supported by a state-of-the-art technological underpinning. A 1994 ES Revitalization grant of \$500,000 was the catalyst for what would evolve into One-Stop/*CareerNet* efforts. The first-year One-Stop implementation grant of nearly \$3.5M, a separate LMI grant of approximately \$1.1M, and a second year implementation grant of over \$3.5M are significantly expanding upon efforts to provide customer-responsive information and services that were originally conceptualized through the ES Revitalization initiative.

Consistent with the state's plan, the major investment of the first year's grant was in *CareerNet* infrastructure. Implementation funds were principally used for the direct costs of equipment and software. Specifically, out of nearly \$3.5M in first-year funding, almost \$1.4M was spent on hardware, and more than \$1M was spent on technical support. Other funded activities and products include software, local support, training, and personnel. State-level respondents believed that the high rate of expenditure during the first year of the grant period, which exceeded 80% exclusive of LMI dollars, positively influenced second-year funding, resulting in a larger second-year grant. Second-year monies will focus on the purchase of equipment for additional local sites, funding for Internet and other remote access features, contractors for network management, and the purchase of a "mid-level server" to significantly enhance the capability and responsiveness of the system to state and local agency needs.

In terms of local One-Stop implementation funding, there is no regular form of allocation to local areas. Notwithstanding one-time early planning grants, each local area receives *CareerNet* hardware and software. Local respondents at the Columbia site raised some questions regarding the prudence of this approach, considering the need for local sites to address the "intangibles" involved with organizational change, such as the necessity of building partnerships and rapport with current and prospective local partner entities.

Although state-level One-Stop partners place a high premium on coordination among partners and initiatives, efforts to implement a One-Stop system have been undertaken within distinct and individual program funding streams and requirements. "Blending systems" is perceived as complicated and prohibitive in the current multi-program

environment. Because of this strongly-held view (in addition to the recently operational status of the One-Stop/*CareerNet* system), state-level partners have not negotiated cost-sharing or similar financial agreements. However, respondents from various state-level partner entities believed that cost-sharing agreements were a viable option worthy of exploration in order to sustain the ongoing development and progress of Maryland's One-Stop system, particularly when the grant period ends.

The prospective block-granting of federal workforce development programs is generally perceived by state-level actors as providing greater opportunities for achieving integrated systems by allowing more flexibility. However, respondents were uncertain as to how much flexibility block-granted programs could realistically offer. In addition, concern was expressed by both state and local respondents that the advantages of block grants might be thwarted by an accompanying reduction in overall funding levels. Indeed, although it was too early to discuss the cost savings generated by One-Stop implementation, respondents believed that one way to ascertain cost savings was the extent to which agencies could serve the same number of customers with shrinking dollars.

## **DESIGN OF THE STATE ONE-STOP INITIATIVE**

### **Evolution and General Description of State Design**

Maryland's One-Stop initiative was originally predicated in the early 1990's upon the need to reengineer the delivery of workforce development services to improve customer service and responsiveness. Although several examples were cited of efforts and initiatives to increase collaboration and coordination toward this end, efforts were pushed to a new level in 1993 with an integrated planning process. This was the first organized attempt to coordinate activities in the absence of a new or specific funding stream as facilitator. State-level entities began a process of engaging in a consultative dialogue that would further the statewide goal of a coordinated system of service delivery to better meet the needs of the Maryland's citizenry. The award of a USDOL "ES Revitalization" grant to reengineer Job Service operations facilitated the state's movement toward its emerging vision.

Thus, Maryland was working on the concept of coordinated and integrated customer service delivery for almost a year before the One-Stop grant proposal was written. The grant was an opportunity to move forward with what was becoming a statewide vision for integrated service delivery with a focus on customer responsiveness. What began as an ES Revitalization effort has been expanded. Consequently, ES Revitalization and One-Stop are very much intertwined.

The desire to provide universal access to customer-responsive information and services with three years of dedicated funding and otherwise falling resource sets, led key One-Stop players to focus on technology as a means to realize an industrious statewide vision. However, technology is but a means to an end. State-level respondents caution observers that “technology” is not *CareerNet*. More properly, *CareerNet* is reflective of defining and using staff differently. The One-Stop effort in Maryland is perceived most importantly as a structural and organizational means to the end of improved information and services for increasing numbers of individual and employer customers.

The elements of the state’s conceptual framework for the One-Stop/ *CareerNet* system include:

- A network of over 50 One-Stop *CareerNet* Centers across the state that provide a minimum core menu of services, delivered chiefly through automation and self-service technologies.
- A network of “Career Information Centers” that house *CareerNet* hardware and software. These centers may be located in libraries, high schools, local DORS or DSS offices, or other community organizations not representing a core partner entity. (Development of this component is a priority for the second year of the grant.)
- An “LMI Bank” for individual and employer customers that provides remote access to high-quality labor market and career information. (Development of this component is a priority for the second year of the grant.)

The *inverted pyramid* approach to service delivery is a key part of the state’s conceptual framework. The majority of customers will access information and services through the self-directed use of computer technology. A smaller percentage of customers will receive information and services from Center staff in groups, and, for those customers in need of more intensive services, individualized services will be available.

The primary component of the state’s conceptual framework is the One-Stop *CareerNet* Center, which can be “hosted” by either of the three core partners, or some combination thereof. It is envisioned that each local site will have identical core services and technology, resource areas that include standardized materials, and at least one Resource Area Specialist to assist customers, so that Maryland’s One-Stop system was characterized by one state-level respondent as “unitarian” at its essence. Beyond this, local areas have the latitude of adding services, components and compatible technologies. Indeed, according to the state’s conceptual framework, core services are but one *level* of

service. “Enhanced Services” represents another level of service that is expected to vary across local areas beyond the satisfaction of minimum requirements (e.g., computer literacy packages and standard software tutorials). For instance, local sites are encouraged to develop and provide on-site workshops in response to local needs.

Local areas have the option of achieving a local vision that incorporates these key features by employing one of three approaches, perceived as successive phases from system coordination to consolidation. The *No-Wrong Door Approach* includes detailed “articulation agreements” signifying referral and service procedures among key service providers in a community. The *Coordinated Multi-Service Center Approach* includes detailed agreements as well as co-located services. The *Integrated Service Approach*, which is the most comprehensive and challenging approach in the current multi-program environment, includes co-located services and partners, “one chain of command” and fully integrated case management.

State respondents believe that the process of developing a core service package is ongoing and evolving. As new technologies and applications are incorporated, the core service package is expected to be expanded so that the transformation to a One-Stop service delivery system is never “done.”

## **Relevance of the State Design to the Four Federal Goals**

### **Universal Access**

The achievement of the federal goal of *Universality* is a clear and distinct objective of Maryland’s One-Stop/*CareerNet* system. According to the state’s vision, the core service package will be available to a universal customer base that includes both individuals and employers. In fact, one of the reasons for the system’s emphasis on self-directed services is to enable the emerging One-Stop system to handle increased customer flow, particularly in an environment of shrinking dollars. Additionally, it is envisioned that the large network of One-Stop Centers will be perceived as a professional environment where customers can access high-quality information and services without stigma or eligibility for a particular program. A network of Career Information Centers, in addition to other forms of remote access, are also means to achieve this federal goal. According to the state’s design, in order to achieve universality, individual customer empowerment is a key concept.

Despite clarity of vision, several challenges pertaining to universal access have emerged as key policy issues. For example, whether and to what extent the provision of universally available services drains resources and opportunity from targeted populations is

a key issue according to various respondents. In addition, considering that direct access to at least the information portions of the *CareerNet* system have been promised to home users and organizations, there are challenges for these linkages if fee-for-service arrangements are explored at a later date. Furthermore, the public response to this transition from individual services to a more self-service/group service system is yet to be determined.

### **Customer Choice**

Improving the customer focus of workforce development services was the principal catalyst for the statewide One-Stop system. The primary response to the federal objective of *Customer Choice* has been the development of self-service options under the leadership of key state-level One-Stop partners. In addition, *CareerNet* will provide multiple full-service One-Stop Centers across the state to assist jobseekers, students, and employers. A network of Career Information Centers, as well as remote access options are also part of the state's design framework. Moreover, local sites are encouraged to develop "enhanced" services that meet the needs and demands of the local labor market.

Although customer-directed access to services and individual empowerment are primary tenets of Maryland's One-Stop system, both state and local-level respondents agree that personal services provided by local staff are also necessary components of a responsive service delivery system. Actually, a basic premise behind the development of technology-driven, user-directed service options was freeing up staff time in order to provide more personal assistance for those customers with a need for more intensive services.

### **Integrated Services**

According to the state vision, the federal objective of *Integrated Services* will be accomplished through a continuous process of minimizing duplication and incorporating additional services within local One-Stop Centers. Partners also believe that, to integrate services successfully, cross-training of staff will be necessary to ensure general knowledge of programs within the One-Stop service delivery system. At present, statewide One-Stop system integration in Maryland is based upon shared information and the coordination of activities and services among individual programs. Respondents from separate entities at both the state level and at the Columbia local site believed that, although integration was a viable goal, collaboration and coordination might be more realistic in the current multi-program environment that precludes the "mingling" of funds.

In order to respond to the challenges of implementing integrated intake and services with multiple partner entities, an interagency, state-local workgroup was in the process of

being formed at the time of the site visit. Consistent with the state's original plan, "Integrated Services" will be a priority of the second year of the implementation period.

### **Performance-Driven/Outcome-Based**

State-level respondents are committed to the establishment of a system that is *Performance-Driven* and *Outcome-Based*. Because the One-Stop/ *CareerNet* system had only recently become operational, however, efforts in this area are in their infancy. First-year priorities were more properly concentrated on bringing local sites on-line and developing core services for individuals. In general, state-level respondents believe One-Stop system performance measurement to be a conceptual challenge for states and local areas that have traditionally focused on performance measurement within distinct categorical programs—each with different priorities, requirements, reporting systems, and informational databases. Respondents expressed a desire to measure One-Stop *system* performance, as opposed to "pieces" within the system. Six broad goals have been developed based upon the perception of what a One-Stop system should accomplish. Local areas are also encouraged to incorporate these goals in local planning efforts.

- Increased Customer Utilization
- Increased Employer Utilization
- Increased Customer Satisfaction
- Increased Labor Market Penetration
- Increased Life-Long Learning
- Greater Agency Participation and Coordination

Although first-year priorities have been otherwise focused, performance measurement is a stated priority for the second year of the grant period, with plans for an interagency, state-local workgroup to concentrate on performance measurement issues. It is envisioned that the workgroup will review these goals/measures for continued feasibility, establish appropriate definitions (e.g., "life-long learning"), and explore potential data sources, reporting arrangements, the potential for local site management, and systematic ways to measure customer satisfaction.

Although One-Stop actors believe performance-driven activities and services to be crucial components of the emerging system, it is clear that One-Stop accountability has emerged as a major policy issue with which the state is struggling. Key questions include: To what extent and how will the transition of services to more self-service and group service approaches impede developing greater accountability? What will constitute accountability when an agency isn't directly in control of a transaction? What agency(ies)

will be held accountable? Perhaps due to these big-picture issues and questions in a system that is evolving and unfolding, current recommendations are to maintain the six current general goals.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE SUPPORT MECHANISMS**

### **Capacity Building and Technical Assistance**

The state of Maryland has placed a premium on capacity building initiatives to support statewide One-Stop implementation and continued progress. Primary responsibility for capacity building projects and related efforts resides with the state's training institute, the Maryland Institute for Employment & Training Professionals (MIETP). Thus, the state is utilizing an existing structure for capacity building to support One-Stop implementation. Although MIETP is the primary developer and deliverer of One-Stop/ *CareerNet* capacity building, a collaborative approach is used that involves state and local officials in both training design and delivery. Four key training areas have been identified to support the state's One-Stop vision:

- *Orientation for Local Staff.* This is currently the predominant training area, as statewide efforts have focused on increasing the number of local sites that are operational. This training uses a train-the-trainer approach, so that local staff recommended by local teams are directly involved in delivering training at local sites. The curriculum includes several topic areas, including "managing change" and the state's "inverted pyramid" approach to service delivery in a One-Stop environment.
- *Resource Area Specialist Training.* This is also expected to be a primary focus during 1996, with opened sites receiving priority. This 16-day training is divided into three separate modules and includes general training on the role of the specialist (e.g., components on customer service, interpersonal communication, etc.), as well as training on different software programs. Once the training is refined based on local feedback, it is the state's intention to issue certificates so that individuals can be "certified" Resource Area Specialists.
- *Technical Training.* This less-structured component is currently being handled by the *CareerNet* technical team, which is under the direction of the *CareerNet* Technology Director employed by DoLLaR. As more local sites come on-line, it is likely that this training component will need to become more structured and defined.
- *Cross-Functional Training.* This training area is the least developed and is based on the assumption that the One-Stop system requires staff to be familiar with a range of local programs and systems. Particularly because the state does not mandate co-located programs and services, this area is

perceived as especially challenging. Promising ideas include “job shadowing” arrangements among partner entities and user-friendly “primer” manuals on agency programs.

In addition to these formally specified training areas, MIETP also provides a range of training on general topic areas (e.g., supervisory skills, marketing, counseling), as well as training for specific audiences (e.g., training for Local Liaisons on “Building Partnerships”). MIETP staff also play key roles as facilitators at state-level meetings, and there are designs to augment their role to include local-level facilitation as well. For instance, there are plans to engage all Resource Area Specialists across the state in periodic focus groups with MIETP staff as facilitators to moderate discussions and ascertain areas of potential future training.

### **Labor Market Information and Related Information Technology Improvements**

The provision of customer-oriented labor market information (LMI) and related services is at the core of Maryland’s One-Stop/*CareerNet* system. This goal is supported by an information technology (IT) framework that is expansive, ambitious and in a constant state of development. DoLLaR has a primary role with respect to LMI/IT development, but the agency works in close partnership with the Maryland Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (MOICC) to build upon agency strengths and minimize duplication.

Respondents believed the statewide One-Stop system to be wholly consistent with the vision promoted by ALMIS (America’s Labor Market Information System). The one-time LMI infusion of \$1.1M, in addition to general One-Stop implementation funding, are financing structures, projects, and initiatives intended to support the development of a statewide system.

The *CareerNet* computer system contains a variety of features and programs to inform decision-making and empower individuals. As mentioned earlier, the state’s One-Stop design and conceptual framework includes different “levels” of service. The “Core Service Level” consists of four “clusters” of minimum core services for individuals and one “cluster” of core services for employers, each to be delivered predominantly through self-directed computer access. Clusters pertaining to individual services are:

- *Automated Personal Access Cluster:* The intent is to create a single automated record for each customer that all participating agencies can use. The state made limited progress, however, with this feature during first year



One-Stop implementation. A workgroup will focus on this aspect of individual services during the second year of the grant.

- *Job Finding Cluster.* This multi-level service is designed to enable individuals to look for and secure a job. It includes ALEX (described below), on-line Job Search Assistance, and other labor exchange services (each of which can be augmented with local workshops, for instance). Plans for this cluster include a self-registration talent bank to market individuals to employers by skills/interests and interactive resume preparation.
- *Career Exploration Cluster.* This includes information on careers, demands and qualifications, occupations suited to individual skills, interests, abilities, etc. There is an automated self-assessment component and a computerized skill inventory feature. It is intended that individual customers can map out appropriate career, employment, and learning plans with the appropriate level of staff assistance. Also included within this cluster is *CareerNet Visions*, the state's Career Information Delivery System (described below).
- *Customer Development Cluster.* This core service enables individuals to obtain information on education and training opportunities in the state and locality, as well as financial and other support. Information on certain eligibility requirements, costs, and graduate earnings is also included.

Two specific LMI/IT products that support Maryland's One-Stop vision are *ALEX* and *CareerNet Visions*. *ALEX* (and an employer version called *XELA*) are the state's automated labor exchange systems, described as the "core of the Job Service self-service capability." Both *ALEX* and *XELA* were functional prior to the receipt of the One-Stop implementation grant, having been developed by a multistate consortium that was chaired by Maryland and funded through an ES Automation Grant. *ALEX* is for individuals; *XELA* (the reverse of "ALEX") is for employers and is contained within the employer "cluster." With *ALEX*, individuals can search on-line for job information in a user-friendly, PC-based format; with *XELA*, employers can look through suppressed applicant files, contacting the Job Service to request referrals.

Maryland's Career Information Delivery System (CIDS) is called *CareerNet Visions*, which was developed by a contractor with funds from the state's LMI grant. In actuality, there are three versions geared for particular audiences, so that the state's CIDS is "developmentally-based." "*Visions*" is the middle school version. "*Visions+*" is for high school/college programs. "*CareerNet Visions*," which is part of the *CareerNet* software, is specifically for adults. It is a self-service career exploration and information system that is user-friendly and enjoyable, with both touch-screen and print capability. All three versions are linked; a conceptual framework has already been formulated for an elementary school version. For local One-Stop sites that are operational, computer workstations offer the

*CareerNet Visions* software. For Job Service offices (one of the possible host sites) that are not yet fully recognized “One-Stop *CareerNet* Centers,” *Visions+* is the system that is available. Although individual customers and local respondents at the Columbia site were enthusiastic about and supportive of the system and its present capabilities, there was also some frustration expressed regarding downtime and slowness of the system. However, there is clear recognition at both the state and local levels that this software is part of a huge system that is still being developed, refined, and enhanced.

In addition to these specific features of the state’s LMI/IT framework, nine additional projects are presently financed by the LMI grant. One project, for instance, pertains to research on employer behavior and current employment dynamics; another pertains to occupational wages and is examining methods to disaggregate wage data to be more geographically specific; still another pertains to specified enhancements to the *CareerNet Visions* system. These and other projects are at different stages of development and extend throughout the implementation period. Projects have clear and distinct goals, timeframes, and are intended to support the statewide vision of making information more accurate, usable, understandable and meaningful for both individual and employer customers.

### **Marketing**

State-level One-Stop actors clearly view marketing as crucial to the success of One-Stop/*CareerNet* implementation. However, the development of a formal statewide One-Stop marketing strategy has been delayed. Notwithstanding some notable activities and specific products, such as a *CareerNet* logo, One-Stop marketing during the first year of the implementation grant did not receive top priority, as the state concentrated on other more pressing concerns, such as increasing the number of local One-Stop sites.

State respondents expressed caution and concern with respect to “selling” a system that is not yet ready and that still requires improvements to basic system features. (Most of the initial systems throughout the state were not installed until October/November 1995.) Marketing a system perceived as performing less than optimally is believed to be costly, ineffective, and, generally, problematic. If customers are “driven away,” it will be more difficult to “get them back.” Furthermore, it was the perception of state-level respondents that there is some anxiety on the part of local area staff with respect to broadly marketing a system to which local areas are still adjusting.

Formal marketing efforts to date have, for the most part, pertained to the establishment of a statewide One-Stop “identity.” For instance, a statewide *CareerNet* logo

has been developed. There is also state-sanctioned (plexiglass) signage that includes the logo at each of the nine current One-Stop/ *CareerNet* sites, in addition to small, adhesive-type labels that could be posted in storefront windows (such as the small “AMEX” or “VISA” labels used by restaurants). The latter would identify a site (either a full-fledged One-Stop/ *CareerNet* Center or a Career Information Center) as one that contained access to the *CareerNet* hardware and software. It is envisioned that Maryland’s citizens will come to know *CareerNet* and its service locations partly through the use of these identifiers.

Related to the issue of identity, the “naming” of local sites was an area still in various stages of conceptualization. At present, operational sites can retain current names, but also have the *CareerNet* logo featured prominently. However, this policy was not fully satisfying to respondents at the Columbia local site. In addition to struggling with a viable name for their Center, both local respondents and individual customers believed the absence of a name to be unsettling.

State respondents caution that the One-Stop effort in Maryland is in a state of evolution. Any formal or informal marketing that takes place is in the context of a “work in progress.” It is anticipated that a formal marketing strategy will be defined later on in the implementation period, probably by the end of the second year of the grant period when additional local sites have come on-line. State One-Stop actors expressed a desire to develop marketing materials that allow local flexibility within state parameters, recognized the need for different marketing strategies for different customer groups, and discussed tentative plans for the establishment of a marketing workgroup. However, designs are clearly in their infancy. Perhaps for this reason, and because the state recognizes that many local sites are already operational, local areas have been encouraged to proceed with marketing efforts that meet local needs and demands.

### **IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS**

The state of Maryland is striving to move forward to create and implement its vision of a One-Stop service delivery system. Statewide implementation is a “phased-in” approach, using a process begun with the receipt of nominations from local sites for either first, second, or third year implementation. Nominees are then evaluated against a series of site-specific criteria (e.g., site readiness, budget capacity, quality of the local plan), in addition to consistency with the broader state picture (e.g., ensuring distribution of sites across the state.) State respondents expressed a need to ensure that, by the end of the second year of the grant period (i.e., 11/96), every jurisdiction within the state is “covered” to some extent.

At the time of the One-Stop site visit, *CareerNet* equipment was installed and available in nine sites within six jurisdictions, well ahead of the three sites planned for implementation prior to the end of the first year of the grant period. By the end of the second year, another 22 sites are expected to go on-line, for a total of 31. Nominations have already been received for close to 90 local sites, making the attainment of the state's goal of a network of over 50 sites appear likely. However, due to the high costs of equipment and system installation, in addition to the likelihood of decreased third-year One-Stop funding, the state may have to scale back implementation plans. Although the total number of expected One-Stop/ *CareerNet* Centers would remain unchanged, smaller host sites previously planned for full One-Stop/ *CareerNet* implementation may instead evolve into Career Information Centers because it is more cost-effective for system installation in larger sites.

Advancement is taking place in other areas as well, including capacity building and the evolving LMI/IT framework, although state-level respondents would prefer speedier One-Stop progress. However, it is logical to expect slower-than-anticipated progress with complex system-level changes, especially those involving the development and installation of a statewide technological system. Early progress was deferred to some extent until a Technology Director was hired to guide system development. The procurement of necessary staff did not occur until several months into the implementation period, slowing initial progress. Subsequently, in order to be responsive to the expectations of both USDOL and local areas, state-level One-Stop actors “knit together” existing products and added new features in order to roll out a system. Beta-testing is a continual process, as is the development of new and improved system capabilities. Therefore, although the state is “laying track while the train is coming,” it is nevertheless moving forward, albeit in a less polished form than respondents would prefer.

### **INFLUENCES ON STATE DESIGN**

In addition to the primary contextual factors mentioned earlier in this profile, other factors have also influenced One-Stop design, progress, and implementation in the state of Maryland. Increasingly flat budgets, with a real possibility of further budget cuts, has, in part, been precipitous in the conceptualization of a highly ambitious statewide One-Stop vision and design that, for instance, utilizes technology as an enabler. The clear desire to do more with less is omnipresent. This has resulted in a clearly-delineated statewide vision that has informed and impacted One-Stop design.

Another key influence is the ES Revitalization initiative, which has clearly been instrumental in the development of the state's One-Stop design. Finally, consistency with what is believed to be a predominant and necessary feature of private sector corporate culture is an additional influence: there is an emphasis on empowering individuals to take responsibility for their own development and careers.

### **ASSESSMENT AND LESSONS LEARNED**

To summarize, Maryland's approach to One-Stop design and implementation is characterized by numerous features, such as: (1) strong state leadership and direction to guide the development of local One-Stop systems within clearly-delineated state parameters supported by a clear business vision, with latitude for local variants regarding organization, approach, and enhanced One-Stop services; (2) a state-developed system that utilizes a technological backbone to provide standardized core services, facilitating universal access and increased customer choice, while being responsive to declining resources; (3) a statewide local-level organizational structure that builds upon existing workforce development systems and structures; (4) a vision that incorporates an "inverted pyramid" service delivery paradigm, offering Maryland's residents tiered services ranging from self-service access to high-quality information and resources, to group services, to more intensive and individualized services; (5) a One-Stop approach that currently offers localities the option of different degrees of coordination among distinct programs and funding streams, from "no-wrong-door," to "co-location," to a more fully integrated approach; (6) planned strong coordination among workforce development initiatives, including ES Revitalization, Welfare-to-Work and School-to-Work; and (7) a strong interest in building support within the employer community.

As stated throughout this Profile, Maryland's approach to the design and implementation of a statewide One-Stop system is bold and enterprising. Although Maryland has only recently entered the operational phase of One-Stop implementation, considering the industrious design and enormity of the cultural change that is envisioned, it is not surprising that challenges have been encountered, and more can be expected. For example, as coordinating partner agencies become increasingly involved in One-Stop implementation and progress, it is likely that the One-Stop context may face additional challenges as partners negotiate roles, responsibilities and otherwise further enter the fray, particularly those agencies that have traditionally served hard-to-serve populations. Moreover, the dynamic nature of the political and organizational environment further

complicates the implementation context. Clarity of purpose, strong state leadership, and the continued support of varied stakeholders will likely be strong facilitators.